

Organizational Communication and Human Resources:

A Proposal for a New Specialization

A Senior Project Presented to

The Faculty of the Communication Studies Department

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

By

Erin Brittany Swoger

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Michael Fahs

Senior Project Advisor

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Signature

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Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. T. C. Winebrenner

Department Chair

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Signature

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Date

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*Origins of Senior Project*

As a Communication Studies Major at California Polytechnic State University, I have always had a passion for expanding my knowledge in the rapidly growing field of Human Resources. Before attending Cal Poly, I was fortunate to be offered an internship with The Walt Disney Company as a Human Resources Undergraduate Associate. Here, I built a foundation in my understanding of Human Resources through experience with employee on-boarding, performance management and employee relations.

After completing my internship with Disney, I took my eagerness to learn with me as I started my career at Cal Poly. I sought out a part time position in Human Resources, where I could expand upon the knowledge gained from my internship. I eagerly applied for the Human Resources Student Assistant position at Associated Students, Incorporated and was hired within my first few weeks at Cal Poly. As I gained confidence in my position at ASI and supplemental knowledge through my beginning COMS coursework, I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in Human Resources after graduation at Cal Poly. I gained invaluable experience at ASI as I was able to take ownership of the recruitment process of 500 student positions at ASI, including interviewing, on-boarding, working closely with hiring managers to understand hiring needs, and finally gaining understanding of how a successful organization is run. ASI also gave me the freedom to create projects of my own where I gained a feeling of responsibility for my position and contribution to ASI.

At this point, I was enrolled in a Communication Studies course entitled “Organizational Communication” with Dr. Michael Fahs. This is where I was first exposed to Communication

concepts and variables including many that linked up with Human Resources content. This class allowed me to bridge my two passions, Human Resources and Communication Studies. I quickly connected with Dr. Fahs and asked for him to advise me in other classes in the Communication Studies major that related to Human Resources content. I was excited to see that both “Business and Professional Communication” and “Advanced Organizational Communication” were available to take as upper-division courses. Although I was excited at the prospect of these two classes, I was eager to take other courses outside of my major that covered Human Resources content. With the encouragement of my co-workers and supervisors at ASI, as well as Dr. Fahs, I met with Dr. Rebecca Ellis, one of the coordinators of the Management and Human Resources concentration in the Orfalea College of Business at Cal Poly. Dr. Ellis suggested that I enroll in two business classes entitled “Human Resources Management” and “Staffing”. With the help of Dr. Fahs and Dr. Ellis, I mapped out a flowchart for myself that included a blend of Communication Studies and Business courses that effectively covered a wide range of Human Resources content.

I was very excited to have a set course for my interest in Human Resources that included both coursework and employment. After two years in my position of Human Resources Student Assistant with ASI, I applied to be the Human Resources Student Manager. I was hired for this position in fall 2009, and am still in that position today. This position has helped me thrive as an HR professional as well as gain insight in how to successfully manage a team of peers. During my time as Student Manager, I began taking the classes I discussed above as well as got involved with a club on campus called “Human Resources Management Association” (HRMA). I noticed something very interesting during this time. A large number of Communication Studies majors began showing up in my business classes and attending HRMA meetings. It was great to see

familiar faces in my classes, as well as bond through our common interests of both Human Resources and Communication Studies.

This trend was also present in my position at ASI. As Human Resources Student Assistants graduated and moved on to full time careers in Human Resources, I noticed a large number of Communication Studies majors applying to fill these positions. Over the past two years, I have personally hired three Communication Studies majors to be part of our Human Resources team at ASI. This number would not seem significant, except for the fact that the average size of our Human Resources staff at ASI is about four student assistants per year. This trend has continued as I am currently hiring to fill the Human Resources Student Assistant and Student Manager positions, and again have a large inflow of Communication Studies majors who have applied. Recently, the Human Resources Management Association club held elections for the executive board and for the first time in the club's history a Communication Studies major is the incoming president for the 2011-2012 school year.

I believe there is a strong correlation between Communication Studies and Human Resources. This correlation gives me reason to believe that many students would benefit from the creation of a Human Resources Specialization within the Communication Studies major. This is the main goal of my senior project. As I graduate from Cal Poly and move on to a career in Human Resources, I want to feel confident that I helped facilitate a set path for Communication Studies majors who are interested in pursuing Human Resources.

Explanation of Specialization Creation:

A specialization in Human Resources would be beneficial to Communication Studies majors for the following reasons:

- Create an accessible and documented body of coursework that would help students better plan their class schedules and meet their goal of gaining knowledge in Human Resources while at Cal Poly.
- Encourage students to engage in proactive planning during the early stages of their time as Communication Studies majors at Cal Poly and thus be better equipped for a successful career at Cal Poly and prepared to enter the workforce post graduation.
- Create a community within the Communication Studies major in which students can work together to become specialized and unified in their common interest in Human Resources and Communication Studies.

My plan to create a specialization in Human Resources in the Communication Studies major is as follows:

- Elicit input from current HR professionals that have experience with Cal Poly coursework and/or experience with Communication Studies and Human Resources based coursework at other universities.

- Elicit input from current Cal Poly students who have experience with Cal Poly coursework related to Human Resources and are pursuing a future career in Human Resources.
- Incorporate the input gained from the interviews of the above individuals and review the Cal Poly University catalog in order to create a set of coursework for the Organizational Communication and Human Resources Specialization.
- Submit this proposed specialization to the Communication Studies faculty for their consideration.
- Present the finalized Human Resources Specialization flowchart to the Communication Studies Club and create an ambassador program within the club to promote all specializations offered within in the Communication Studies Department.

*History of Specializations in the Communication Studies Department:*

After expressing my frustration at the current disorganization of specializations in the Communication Studies major, Dr. Michael Fahs described the history behind specializations in the Communication Studies Department at Cal Poly in order to give me a full picture of the situation. He explained that in the past the Communication Studies Department required students to meet with their advisors once a year in order to make sure that students stay on track for graduation and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding coursework. Through these

meetings many faculty members felt that they were having similar conversations with a large number of students when recommending coursework for various areas of study within the Communication Studies major. This led a group of faculty members to create specializations with documented flowsheets of classes that clustered around a specific field of study related to Communication Studies (Appendices A, B and C) (Fahs, 2011). The specializations were as follows:

- Organizational Communication
- Pre-Law
- Persuasion and Sales

These specializations proved to be successful in helping to facilitate students in creating a solidified path when selecting classes within the Communication Studies major in the beginning; however, after years of requiring students to meet with their advisors annually, this requirement was dropped. This made the utilization of the specializations and the supplemental forms created for them difficult to implement. Knowledge of the specializations dwindled and is the case for students currently; the knowledge of the specializations is almost non-existent.

This lack of direction has reduced Communication Studies students' ability to plan for their futures. The field of Communication Studies is appealing to many because it is very broad and is utilized in practically every profession. However, this practicality poses a problem. With almost every profession as an option for Communication Studies majors, which do you choose? How does a Communication Studies major take his/her theoretical knowledge and transfer them into tangible skills to bring into the workforce? I believe that the answer to these questions can easily be found in creating more structured direction for our students through updating and

reintroducing specializations and supplemental flowsheets of coursework. This will encourage students to become more focus, to look for experience related a specific field, and overall become more prepared for graduation and employment thereafter.

Through my project I hope to fine tune the specializations created by faculty in the past by updating course numbers and descriptions as well as redesigning the Organizational Communication specialization to better represent Human Resources content. After redesigning the specializations, I plan on working with the Communication Studies Club officers to create a specialization ambassador program within the club which will educate students on the specializations available as well as provide valuable information pertaining to the specializations. This will not only help Communication Studies students rid themselves of the stigma of being unfocused, but will also help increase participation within the Communication Studies club by giving it additional purpose and increasing its perceived value in the eyes of students. In addition, Communication Studies faculty advisors should find the updated specializations more useful and current for use with their advisees.

#### Questionnaire Responses:

After eliciting input from Cal Poly students and Human Resources professionals through my questionnaire, I found many responses in support of the creation of a specialization in Human Resources within the Communication Studies Department. I also received feedback from current Communication Studies majors that indicated that they need a more specific path of coursework to obtain a specialization in their field of study. Next I will focus on responses from current Cal Poly students and common themes that emerged from their feedback.



- *Need for direction within Communication Studies major:*
  - “I’m tired of this misinformed ‘jack of all trades, master of none’ concept behind my major. Employers want ‘masters’ with specific knowledge and skills (Claire Kister, Appendix D).”
  - “As a first year Communication Studies major, I had no idea what job options were available to me until I went to the Career Symposium. However, I was overwhelmed by the list of possibilities and was desperate for direction. If Communication Studies offered concentrations and/or specializations, like the College of Business, this would help majors channel their studies and learn more in their field of interest (Claire Kister, Appendix D).”
  - “It would be very helpful if the Communication Studies department had an ‘introductory’ course that explained what types of careers are available and more specifically, what HR means, its function, and WHY a COMS degree can lead you down that path (Hannah Drain, Appendix E).”
  - “I had relatively little knowledge of what the true function of HR is and opportunities available to pursue HR until the end of my second year at Cal Poly- and even then, this realization came from working with ASI, not from the COMS department (Hannah Drain, Appendix E).”

- “This major also does not have the option to specialize or concentrate. Because the major is so broad, I think it would be a good idea to give students the option to narrow their focus. Minor in business is not a viable option because it is difficult to complete and does not actually focus on HR or management functions (Christine Herman, Appendix F).”
  
- *Desire to work with the Orfalea College of Business regarding an HR Specialization:*
  - “I think that it is really important to have the basic classes that the Business program provides, but I think that some of the Communications classes should double count as electives for this concentration. Communication is a crucial part for a Human Resources Professional and I think that it should be given credit in the concentration process (Alexandra Louderback, Appendix G).”
  
  - “I wasn't a Comms major, but HR wasn't even offered in OCOB as a specialization during the course of my college career. I made do with the selection of courses that were offered and made my own emphasis in HR, but if more specialized classes were made available I would have taken advantage of that. I think it would be extremely beneficial if OCOB and the Comms department coordinated their efforts in creating a hybrid HR specialization major because of the unique aspects each of the colleges brings to the table. From my perspective, OCOB has a distinct structure to the coursework students go through

with emphasis on law, business objectives, and organizational structure. Comms majors develop the ability to be extremely well spoken, professional in their demeanor, and they understand/can convey the best way to communicate something to other individuals whether it is in an interview setting, training program, etc. All of these concepts mentioned are extremely important in the role of an HR professional and there is much opportunity to expand the curriculum that Cal Poly offers to produce graduates well versed in the field of Human Resources (Caeli Horwith, Appendix H).”

- “From my knowledge, the Orfalea College of Business was phasing out their Human Resources Management concentration. I have the highest respect for Cal Poly and its ability to prepare students for careers, but I think there is an ignorance when specializations like Human Resources are not considered in business or relatable curriculums. Human Resources continues to be a vital aspect of business, especially now as labor laws become more stringent and as employees struggle to maintain the human element in the workplace (Ashley Bartlett, Appendix I).”

▪ *Connection between Communication Studies and Human Resources content:*

- “I have met SO many people in HR who were Communication Studies majors. It’s a natural fit (Jennifer McKenzie, Appendix J).”

- “Students in the Communications Studies major are going to be well suited to “people” jobs upon graduation, such as Human Resources. More specifically a recruiter/talent acquisition role, T&D position, or something dealing with union contract negotiations. The field of communication studies promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication which is what Human Resource departments are built on, so HR is a logical career path for those students (Caeli Horwith, Appendix H).”
- “HR is all about Communication. You interact with every single employee of the company, from the CEO to the janitor. HR requires a ton of multi-tasking and organization, and constant interaction with people (from your own employees to job applicants to vendors). You need excellent communication skills in order to succeed in HR (Jennifer McKenzie, Appendix J).”
- “I do feel though that my background in communication has been invaluable to me as an HR professional. I have the tools and skills to communicate with a diverse group of individuals, such as applicants, employees, supervisors, administrators, vendors, etc. When dealing with HR issues, effective communication is essential to success (Carol Brizendine, Appendix K).”
- “Communication is key for any organization, I think if more companies focused on this there would be greater returns. My experience working with communication students here on campus has played a valuable role in our hiring

and these students are looked up to as they are knowledgeable in their field.

Adding HR into the mix of their coursework will help them gain more exposure to the business world (Dawn Annoni, Appendix L).”

- “Communication is an essential aspect of Human Resources. Courses such as Interpersonal, Small Group, and Organizational Communication provide students with the knowledge on how to effectively work with people as well as experience in this area through projects and simulations. Some of the HR relevant skills include: addressing conflict, meeting individual and group needs, problem solving, and adapting to different communication styles. If a job in Human Resources requires professionals to mediate and facilitate communication between employers and employees, then Communication Studies majors are prepared to take on these challenges based on their coursework. In addition, upper division elective courses, such as Dr. Fahs' Business and Professional Communication and Advanced Organizational Communication, provide students with the opportunity to practice conducting interviews and training sessions, which are directly related to recruitment and training and development, which are two important aspects of Human Resources. While the major does not currently provide specific details in regards to the regulations and policies administered by HR, Communication Studies majors are trained to approach the tasks and challenges encountered by professionals in this field (Claire Kister, Appendix D).”

- “Positions in Human Resources require much of the same skills that COMS majors develop. Written, Oral, and Interpersonal Communication are key to learning how to effectively handle HR in a corporate environment. Communication Majors are also more self-starters, flexible, and able to understand confidentiality and self-monitoring concepts that will help them succeed in this field (Christine Herman, Appendix F).”
- “Communication both verbal and written is a crucial part of this field. For a Coms major, having the extensive knowledge in how to communicate with all different types of people in all different types of ways is so important. This skill could become very important when trying to communicate with an employee that is different than what management is used to. Having someone on staff that has mastered this skill could prove to be extremely valuable (Alexandra Louderback, Appendix G).”

Interviewee Profiles:

- Claire Kister
  - Experience related to Human Resources:
    - Human Resources Student Assistant at Associated Students, Inc.
    - Human Resources Management Association, President
    - HR coursework in BUS and COMS classes
- Alexandra Louderback
  - Experience related to Human Resources:

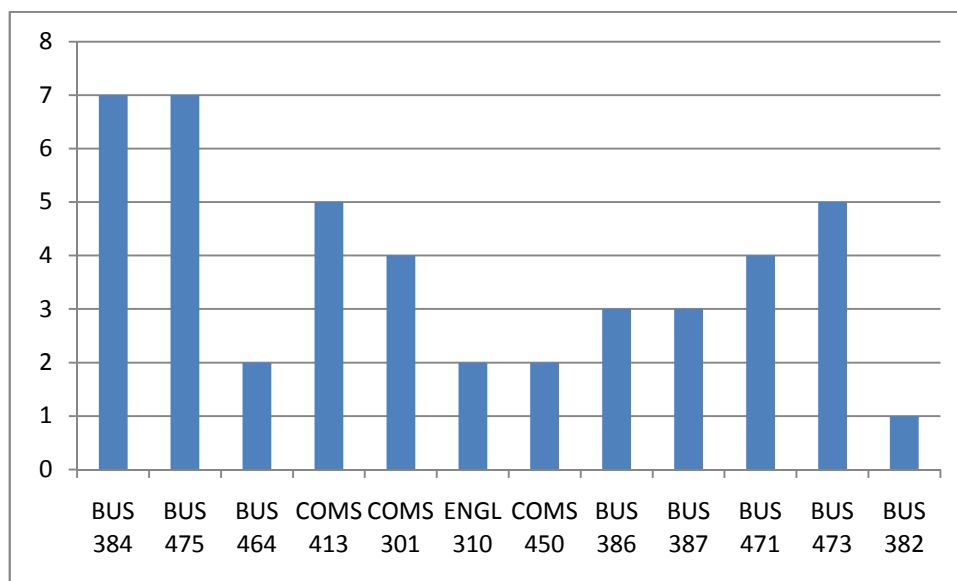
- Human Resources Student Assistant at Associated Students, Inc.
- Human Resources Management Association, member
- SharedHR, Consultant
- HR coursework in BUS classes
- Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification
- Hannah Drain
  - Experience related to Human Resources:
    - 2011-2012 Human Resources Student Manager at Associated Students, Inc.
    - HR coursework in COMS classes
- Christine Herman
  - Experience related to Human Resources:
    - Human Resources Student Assistant at Associated Students, Inc.
    - HR coursework in BUS and COMS classes
- Jennifer McKenzie
  - Experience related to Human Resources:
    - HR Coordinator at Omni Hotels and Resorts, San Diego
    - Past Human Resources Student Assistant at Associated Students, Inc.
    - Graduated Magna Cum Laude from Cal Poly with a B.A. in Communication Studies and took BUS, COMS and ENG coursework related to HR
- Ashley Bartlett
  - Experience related to Human Resources:

- HR Coordinator/Leader in Development at Omni Hotels and Resorts, San Francisco
- Past Human Resources Student Manager at Associated Students, Inc.
- Graduated Cal Poly with B.S. in Business Administration and a concentration in Management which requires BUS coursework related to HR
- Human Resources Management Association, past President and member
- Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification
- Caeli Horwith
  - Experience related to Human Resources:
    - Human Resources Technician I at Associated Students, Inc.
    - Past Human Resources Student Assistant at Associated Students, Inc.
    - Graduated Cal Poly with B.S. in Business Administration and a concentration in Management which requires BUS coursework related to HR
    - Completed COMS 413: Advanced Organization Communication
    - Human Resources Management Association, past member and Director of Membership
- Carol Brizendine
  - Experience related to Human Resources:
    - Human Resources Coordinator at Associated Students, Inc.
    - Graduated from Western Illinois University with a B.A. in Communication Studies and completed COMS coursework related to HR



- Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR)
- Dawn Annoni
  - Experience related to Human Resources:
    - Human Resources Technician II at Associated Students, Inc.
    - Graduated from Columbia College with a B.S. in Business Administration and a concentration in Management.
    - Completed BUS coursework at Cal Poly related to HR

*Class Suggestions from Interviewees\*:*



\*Suggestions from Carol Brizendine were omitted due to incongruity of classes between Western Illinois University and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

*Creation of Organizational Communication and Human Resources Specialization:*

Based on the feedback from the interviewees, my experience in classes, as well as a survey of the current coursework offered at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, I compiled the following classes to be included in the Organizational Communication and Human Resources Specialization (Appendix M):

- Required Coursework [14-16 units]:
  - COMS 301 “Business and Professional Communication” [4]
  - COMS 413 “Advanced Organizational Communication” [4]
  - COMS 450 “Internship” [2-4]
  - ENGL 310 “Corporate Communication” [4]
- Elective Coursework [12 units]
  - BUS 382 “Organizations, People, and Technology” [4]
  - BUS 384 “Human Resources Management” [4]
  - BUS 386 “Employee Training and Development” [4]
  - BUS 387 “Organizational Behavior” [4]
  - BUS 471 “Compensation” [4]
  - BUS 472 “Labor Relations” [4]
  - BUS 473 “Employment Law” [4]
  - BUS 475 “Staffing” [4]
  - BUS 486 “Human Resources Information Systems” [4]
  - SOC 395 “Sociology of Complex Organizations” [4]
  - REC 320 “Special Event Planning” [4]
  - REC 420 “Festival and Event Management” [4]

*Creation of Specialization Ambassador Program in Communication Studies Club:*

In order to market this new specialization, as well as newly updated specialization options (Appendices M, N and O) to current students, I would like to propose a Specialization Ambassador Program within the Communication Studies Club at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. The Ambassadors of each specialization will provide club members with current events related to their respective specializations including speakers, events, articles, etc. that would be of interest to specified areas of study within Communication Studies. This would help offer Communication Studies majors direction and support through peer to peer communication, which fosters an environment of inclusion and community that is much needed in our department.

I feel very strongly that this would help to reverse the “jack of all trades, master of none” stigma that is prevalent among our majors. Members would not be required to declare a specialization, but highly encouraged to do so before the end of their second year at Cal Poly. This would help Communication Studies majors set a path for themselves early on in their college career and work to gain knowledge in coursework and job experience that will help them as they approach graduation and their career search. Ambassadors would also present information to the Communication Studies Club in order to educate them on their options of specified fields of study within the Communication Studies field.

*Job Descriptions:*

During my career search these past few months, I found many positions that I feel a student who completes the Organizational Communication and Human Resources would be well qualified for. The job descriptions below describe qualities that highlight the need for both

Communication Studies skills in addition to Human Resources knowledge. These jobs show a need for the creation of the new specialization within our Communication Studies Department, in order to better prepare our majors to be more competitive candidates as they search for full time employment:

- Position: Human Resources Manager
  - Location: Cupertino, California
  - Company: Apple, Inc.
    - The successful candidate will combine outstanding relationship skills and analytical abilities with a passion for enabling our people to exceed their potential. We also look for people who can build creative programs and products that can help our teams deliver more effectively. This HRM will work closely across key HR areas. He or she will rely on core skills such as coaching, influencing, facilitation, communication, process development and critical thinking. We look for high-energy, thoughtful professionals who can work at both granular, tactical, and big-picture.
  - Specific Responsibilities include:
    - Organizational Development: Consult and influence managers to maximize organizational effectiveness. Must be able to identify opportunities for change.
    - Talent and Performance Management: Advise managers and employees on issues such as identifying performance improvement, identifying key talent and succession planning.

- Employee Relations: Primary point person on all ER issues, including manager/employee issues, policies and procedures, investigations, terminations and reorganizations.
- Training and Development: Work closely with corporate Training program to design, secure and deliver appropriate training to the organization. Must have outstanding presentation skills and be comfortable at the front of the room.
- Compensation and Benefits: Execute Corporate comp and benefits programs, including annual compensation review, salary surveys and retention plans. Partner with Corporate functions to assist with leave management, disabilities and Worker's Compensation.
- Staffing: Act as liaison between corporate Staffing team and the business.
- HR Metrics: Track and report key metrics to business leaders. Must be familiar with metrics and be able to analyze and present confidently.

(Apple, Inc., 2011)

This job description begins with the need for “outstanding relationship skills”. This skill is vital for all Communication Studies majors and highlighted in the following courses:

- COMS 212 “Interpersonal Communication”
- COMS 217 “Small Group Communication”

The description continues with a need for experience in, “coaching, influencing, facilitation, communication, process development and critical thinking”, which are covered in the following COMS courses:

- COMS 322 “Persuasion”
- COMS 213 “Organizational Communication”
- COMS 301 “Business and Professional Communication”
- COMS 413 “Advanced Organizational Communication”

The description then lists necessary Human Resources specific skills such as Compensation and Benefits, Staffing and HR Metrics. These areas are covered in the following elective courses available in the specialization:

- BUS 384 “Human Resources Management”
- BUS 386 “Employee Training and Development”
- BUS 475 “Staffing”
- BUS 471 “Compensation”
- BUS 472 “Labor Relations”

The two positions below are also in the Human Resources field and highlight necessary skills that are covered in Communication Studies classes, as well as the coursework suggested for the Organizational Communication and Human Resources Specialization:

- Position: Human Resources Coordinator
  - Location: San Carlos, CA
  - Company: Kalypxo
    - Kalypxo is looking for a resourceful, energetic, and self-directed individual to coordinate a diverse range of HR initiatives designed to ensure effective HR systems, benefits, record keeping, and employee relationship practices.

This position has a heavy emphasis on HRIS administration. You will be the owner and expert of managing data in ADP (HRB). You will enter all data relevant to employee records, earnings, and benefits, as well as ensure this data is accurate. You will also design and run analyses and reports.

Additional responsibilities include benefits administration, HR compliance, and managing other HR-related programs, such as on/off boarding, compensation, and performance management.

- Qualifications:
  - Bachelors degree in HR, or related field

- At least 2 years experience in HRIS administration (preferably HRB)
- PC proficiency in Microsoft Office (particularly Word and Excel)
- Superior verbal, written, and interpersonal skills
- Ability to communicate effectively within all levels of the organization, including the executive staff
- Self-motivation to find solutions and prioritize client service while remaining organized across multiple simultaneous functions and tasks in a fast-paced environment
- Demonstrated ability to keep information confidential

(Kalypxo, 2011)

- Position: Sourcing Recruiter
  - Location: Cupertino, CA
  - Company: Amazon
    - Lab126 is seeking a talented, results oriented Sourcing Recruiter, with a passion for delighting the client and candidate, to join our recruiting organization. You will work with a close-knit recruiting team. Your focus will be on driving staffing strategies along with candidate generation and closing of candidates in partnership with your clients. This is a great opportunity to be part of a team focused on making an impact on the business, recruiting for innovative talent.



- Basic Qualifications:
  - Bachelors degree or equivalent experience required.
  - 3+ years recruiting or sourcing experience working in a medium to high volume, high hiring bar environment
  - Skilled at partnering with hiring teams to build effective sourcing, assessment, and closing approaches with an ability to manage customer expectations.
  - Strong sourcing skills with a track record of implementing innovative and effective strategies for sourcing passive candidates
  - Must have built scalable recruiting programs and processes
  - Focus on results, ability to drive the recruiting process and provide responsive follow-up to both candidates and hiring teams
  
- Preferred Qualifications:
  - Superior written and verbal communication
  - A demonstrated passion for recruiting and providing amazing customer service
  - Attention to detail with exceptional analytical and process management skills

(Lab126, part of the Amazon.com, Inc. group of companies, 2011)

As you can see, there are many positions that require both Communication Studies education in addition to supporting Human Resources courses offered by other colleges and departments at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Students have always had the opportunity to take courses that help them gain a well-rounded knowledge of these skills, but were not aware of the courses available to them. The creation of an Organizational Communication and Human Resources specialization will help offer our majors clarification of coursework and help them stand out as highly qualified candidates in a highly competitive job market. Through our majors' success in the workplace, the Communication Studies department at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo will be considered even more prestigious than at present among prospective and current students, faculty and staff at the university.

*Reflections and Directions:*

After reflecting on my senior project and relating it to the senior projects of my colleagues, I feel very satisfied in knowing that my project will be able to directly help Communication Studies majors in a tangible and direct way. Although many of my colleagues produced high quality papers related to Communication Studies topics and helped build the body of knowledge that is taught in our curriculum, I am proud of myself for taking a more creative route than a structured paper. I feel that I built off of the foundation of knowledge that I gained as a Communication Studies major and bridged it with the knowledge that I gained in other coursework at Cal Poly as well as work and internship experience in the Human Resources field. This project truly is a culmination of my two passions: Communication Studies and Human Resources, which I am confident is shared by a number of other individuals and Cal Poly

students. Through my senior project, I have created a specialization that will help encourage others to take a path of coursework that I found extremely rewarding and beneficial as I searched for a career after college. I am proud to say that the knowledge I gained through this coursework assisted me in gaining a career with Netflix as a Recruiting Researcher after I graduate from Cal Poly. I am certain that those students who choose to complete the Organizational Communication and Human Resources Specialization will also find careers as exciting and challenging as the one that I am about to begin.

If any student were to choose to expand on the work that I have completed in my senior project, I suggest the following directions:

- Partner with a professor in the Orfalea College of Business to create new coursework in the Human Resources field of study in such areas as:
  - Test preparation for the “Assurance of Learning” learning assessment offered by the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) for undergraduate students.
    - This test has taken the place of the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification exam, which now requires a two year exempt HR professional work experience eligibility, thus preventing students from obtaining the certification.
  - Benefits and Payroll
  - Employee Relations
  - Labor Relations

- Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS)
- Partner with Dr. Michael Fahs to create a more structured senior project class organized for Organizational Communication and Human Resources specialization students. This could be such things as:
  - Completion of a Human Resources related internship or co-op with a substantial write up and reflection on the program.
  - Completion of a College of Business senior project course specifically related to Human Resources and Organizational Communication content.
    - Such as “Assurance of Learning” test preparation
- Follow up on the structure of the specialization ambassador program within the Communication Studies club at Cal Poly.
  - Take suggestions of other specialization areas within the Communication Studies department.
  - Create other necessary positions within the Communication Studies club to increase involvement and participation within majors.

## Appendix A

**Specialization**  
**Organizational Communication**  
 Speech Communication Department

For Speech Communication majors considering a career in private or public organizations: personnel, employee relations, sales, service, management/supervision, decision-making, and evaluation; or for those advancing to graduate work to prepare for business, industry, health professions, public relations, government, or politics.

<u>Required</u>		<u>Units</u>
SPC 316	Intercultural Communication	4
SPC 331	Political Advocacy and Contemporary Rhetoric	4
SPC 413	Advanced Organizational Communication	4
SPC 301	Business and Professional Communication	4
SPC 450	Internship: Speech Communication	2-4

Seven (7) units from the following:

BUS 347	Marketing Research I	4
BUS 348	Buyer Behavior	4
BUS 381	Industrial Management	4
BUS 383	Industrial Relations	3
BUS 384	Human Resources Management	4
BUS 449	Sales Management	4
BUS 471	Compensation	4
ENGL 310	Corporate Communication	4
ENGL 318	Advanced Professional Writing	4
HUM 402	Values and Technology	4
JOUR 312	Introduction to Public Relations	4
JOUR 331	Contemporary Advertising	4
PHIL 321	Philosophy of Science	3
PHIL 337	Business Ethics	3
STAT 421	Sampling Techniques	4

**TOTAL 25 Units**

Advisers can offer supplementary information, including suggested General Education and Breadth courses, which should strengthen background and preparation.

## Appendix B

**Specialization**  
**Pre-Law**  
 Speech Communication Department

For Speech Communication majors considering law school. Most law schools recommend that their students have a broadly-based undergraduate degree with emphasis on communication skills (especially critical thinking), written communication, and speaking skills.

<u>Required</u>		<u>Units</u>
SPC 316	Intercultural Communication	4
SPC 325	Argumentation	4
SPC 331	Political Advocacy and Contemporary Rhetoric	4

Seven (7) units selected from the following:

BUS 212	Financial Accounting for Nonbusiness Majors	4
PHIL 331	Ethics	3
PHIL 335	Social Ethics	3
SPC 301	Business and Professional Communication	4
SPC 350	Advanced Forensics (2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter)	2
SPC 413	Advanced Organizational Communication	4

Six (6) units from the following:

BUS 207	Business Law	4
CRP 404	Environmental Law	3
POLS 334	Jurisprudence	3
POLS 341	American Constitutional Law	4
POLS 344	Civil Liberties	4
SOC 402	Crime and Delinquency	4

TOTAL 25 Units

Advisers can offer supplementary information, including suggested General Education and Breadth courses, which should strengthen background and preparation.

## Appendix C

**Specialization**  
**Persuasion and Sales**  
Speech Communication Department

For Speech Communication majors who have interest in all types of sales: industrial, investments, real estate, corporate, various types of marketing.

<u>Required</u>		<u>Units</u>
SPC 316	Intercultural Communication	4
SPC 325	Argumentation	4
SPC 435	Great Speeches	4
SPC 301	Business and Professional Communication	4
SPC 450	Internship: Speech Communication	2-4

Seven (7) units from the following:

*(depending on type of sales interest – consult adviser)*

BUS 212	Financial Accounting for Nonbusiness Majors	4
BUS 201	Business Law Survey	3
BUS 347	Marketing Research I	4
BUS 348	Buyer Behavior	4
BUS 349	Selling: Building Partnerships	4
BUS 404	Governmental and Social Influences on Business	4
ECON 221	Microeconomics	4
ECON 222	Macroeconomics	4
ENGL 310	Corporate Communication	4
JOUR 312	Introduction to Public Relations	4
PSY 252	Social Psychology	4
SOC 315	Race and Ethnic Relations	4

TOTAL 25 Units

Advisers can offer supplementary information, including suggested General Education and Breadth courses, which should strengthen background and preparation.

## Appendix D

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communication Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and the skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the human resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flow chart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for a future Human Resources career.

Name: Claire Kister

Year at Cal Poly (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.): Junior

Major: Communication Studies

Minor:

Career Goals: After college, I want to get a job in Human Resources, particularly recruitment. I want to pass the PHR within the next 5 years and earn my MBA in HR and Management within the next 8 years. I also want to volunteer by hosting workshops which provide instruction on resumes, cover letters, and interviews.

1. During your time at Cal Poly, what courses have you taken that you feel directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources? (*Please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class.*)

Human Resource Management, BUS 384, Dr. Rebecca Ellis. This course is an introduction to staffing, compensation, employee development and labor relations.

Interpersonal Communication, COMS 212, Barbara Shea. This course focuses on the maintenance and termination of personal and professional relationships.

Organizational Communication, COMS 213, Dr. Michael Fahs. This course focuses on organizational structure, work environment, message flow, teamwork, communication styles, and the difference between leadership and management.

Business and Professional Communication, COMS 301, Dr. Michael Fahs. This course is a workshop that provides students with the opportunity to practice presenting oral briefings and conducting interviews in a professional environment.

Advanced Organizational Communication, COMS 413, Dr. Michael Fahs. This course is a workshop that provides students with the opportunity to prepare and conduct training sessions. Students who take this course apply strategies used by professional trainers in diverse settings.

2. What courses related to Human Resources do you still plan on taking?

Staffing

3. What areas do you wish Cal Poly offered coursework in to better prepare you for your future Human Resources career?



Labor Relations

Employment Law

PHR Certification Prep

4. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

A specialization in Human Resources would enable Communication Studies majors to focus their career path. As a first year Communication Studies major, I had no idea what job options were available to me until I went to the Career Symposium. However, I was overwhelmed by the list of possibilities and was desperate for direction. If Communication Studies offered concentrations and/or specializations, like the College of Business, this would help majors channel their studies and learn more in their field of interest.

Once I knew I was interested in Human Resources, I decided to take control of my education and organize a list of courses that would prepare me for a career in this field. If a specialization in Human Resources were created, Communication Studies majors (like myself) would finally have a career target. I'm tired of this misinformed "jack of all trades, master of none" concept behind my major. Employers want "masters" with specific knowledge and skills. A specialization in Human Resources would provide majors with supplemental knowledge that is relevant to Communication Studies (as I will explain further below). In addition, majors who want to go into Human Resources would not have to convince prospective employers why they are just as qualified as Business majors to perform the job.

5. Would you consider pursuing a specialization in Human Resources if it were available?

Yes!

6. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

Communication is an essential aspect of Human Resources. Courses such as Interpersonal, Small Group, and Organizational Communication provide students with the knowledge on how to effectively work with people as well as experience in this area through projects and simulations. Some of the HR relevant skills include: addressing conflict, meeting individual and group needs, problem solving, and adapting to different communication styles. If a job in Human Resources requires professionals to mediate and facilitate communication between employers and employees, then Communication Studies majors are prepared to take on these challenges based on their coursework. In addition, upper division elective courses, such as Dr. Fahs' Business and Professional Communication and Advanced Organizational Communication, provide students with the opportunity to practice conducting interviews and training sessions, which are directly related to recruitment and training and development, which are two important aspects of Human Resources. While the major does not currently provide specific details in regards to the regulations and policies administered by HR, Communication Studies majors are trained to approach the tasks and challenges encountered by professionals in this field.

## Appendix E

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communication Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and the skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the human resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flow chart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for a future Human Resources career.

Name: Hannah Drain

Year at Cal Poly (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.): Junior

Major: Communication Studies

Minor: Undeclared

Career Goals: Business Consulting, Training and Development, working with an forestry or environmental company.

1. During your time at Cal Poly, what courses have you taken that you feel directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources? *(Please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class.)*

Organizational Communication: COMS 213- Dr. Fahs- This class was primarily regarding theories in the business world that directly applied to organizational communication and the way in which communication structures function within companies .

Business and Professional Communication: COMS 301- Dr. Fahs- This course focused on interviewing, HR laws, and communication strategies for selecting employees.

Advanced Organizational Communication: COMS 413- Dr. Fahs- This class deals with how to plan an effective training session using specific communication strategies. It is very "hands-on" and embraces the Cal Poly "Learn by Doing" motto.

2. What courses related to Human Resources do you still plan on taking?

I plan on taking Business courses for more HR information. The Communication Studies department does not offer much in the way of HR courses.

3. What areas do you wish Cal Poly offered coursework in to better prepare you for your future Human Resources career?

It would be great if Cal Poly offered courses in Management communication- something that focuses specifically on the "soft" management styles. While some of the COMS courses previously mentioned do touch on this topic, not many are very "straightforward" in their objectives.

It would be very helpful if the Communication Studies department had an "introductory" course that explained what types of careers are available and more specifically, what HR means, its function, and WHY a COMS degree can lead you down that path.

4. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

This is a great idea that will open up many career opportunities for Communication Studies students. For instance, I had relatively little knowledge of what the true function of HR is and opportunities available to pursue HR until the end of my second year at Cal Poly- and even then, this realization came from working with ASI, not from the COMS department.

5. Would you consider pursuing a specialization in Human Resources if it were available?

Yes. I would consider specializing in HR. The COMS department does not offer specific specializations (that I have been aware of) and this would be a great way to narrow in on a useful marketable skill learned in the classroom.

6. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

Human Resources encompasses most of what we learn in Communication Studies. Many of the theories are applicable to the position. It is essentially a great way to utilize classroom knowledge. HR is a great way to learn about how the business world operates, and it's personally fulfilling. HR gives you the opportunity to make direct relationships with people within the work place. It's a fun environment that is personally and professionally enjoyable.

## Appendix F

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communication Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and the skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the human resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flow chart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for a future Human Resources career.

Name: Christine Herman

Year at Cal Poly (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.): Junior

Major: Communication Studies

Minor: Pre-Law

Career Goals: Human Resources, Mediator (Law)

1. During your time at Cal Poly, what courses have you taken that you feel directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources? *(Please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class.)*

BUS 384 HR Management; Ellis : Reviewing and applying actual HR cases in context

COMS 213 Organization Communication; Fahs : Practice in and study of message flow patterns and organizational effectiveness

2. What courses related to Human Resources do you still plan on taking?

COMS 413 Advanced Organizational Communication

COMS 301 Business and Professional Communication

BUS 386 Training and Development

BUS 382 Organizations, People, and Technology

3. What areas do you wish Cal Poly offered coursework in to better prepare you for your future Human Resources career?

Employment Law, more actual Management classes, Advanced HR, PHR certification courses

4. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

I think it would be great addition to the Communication Studies curriculum. I am taking a lot of HR classess that will not count for any credit. HR is also closely related to Communication Studies and a lot of skills taught in the major are needed for HR. This major also does not have the option to specialize or concentrate. Because the major is so broad, I think it would be a good idea to give students the option to narrow their focus.

Minoring in business is not a viable option because it is difficult to complete and does not actually focus on HR or management functions.

5. Would you consider pursuing a specialization in Human Resources if it were available?

Yes, I would definitely consider pursuing a specialization in Human Resources if it were available!

6. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

Positions in Human Resources require much of the same skills that COMS majors develop. Written, Oral, and Interpersonal Communication is key to learning how to effectively handle HR in a corporate environment. Communication Majors are also more self-starters, flexible, and able to understand confidentiality and self-monitoring concepts that will help them succeed in this field.

## Appendix G

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communication Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and the skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the human resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flow chart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for a future Human Resources career.

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Name: Alexandra Louderback

Year at Cal Poly (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.): Senior

Major: Business Management

Minor: Law and Society

Career Goals: To pursue a position that can develop in to a career that is challenging yet fulfilling. I am beginning in the realm of consulting for human resources and excited where that will lead me.

1. During your time at Cal Poly, what courses have you taken that you feel directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources? *(Please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class.)*

BUS 386 Employee Training and Development- Coget Involves the design, delivery and evaluation of employee training and human resource development in knowledge-based organizational settings. We learned the basic structures and important of performance management and feedback systems; and hwo to apply them in our careers.

BUS 475 Staffing- Ellis In this course we learned the best practices for hiring, firing, downsizing etc in staffing a company. Learned ways to maintain morale and handle employment provelms as they arise. On top of that we learned the applicable case law that may be used when issues do in fact arise.

BUS 384 Human Resources Management- Ellis Introduction to functional areas of the discipline including staffing, compensation, employee development and labor relations. We also learned the basicperformance and human capital management, employer legal and social responsibility for employee wellbeing, managing a diverse/global workforce, and using human resource information systems.

2. What courses related to Human Resources do you still plan on taking?

I have completed my entire concentration but I do plan on furthering my knowledge through a higher certification as well as through day to day changes in the field. THE information pertraining to various areas of HR changes rapidly

3. What areas do you wish Cal Poly offered coursework in to better prepare you for your future Human Resources career?

Although Benefits and Payroll can be very boring at times, I wish we had opportunities to attend seminars or something like a shortened course so that we can learn in a shorter amount of time. I

think that if we had the opportunity for a 1 or 2 unit class that was taught by a professional in a seminar style a lot more students would be interested.

4. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

I think that it is really important to have the basic classes that the Business program provides, but I think that some of the Communications classes should double count as electives for this concentration. Communication is a crucial part for a Human Resources Professional and I think that it should be given credit in the concentration process.

5. Would you consider pursuing a specialization in Human Resources if it were available?

N/A

6. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

Communication both verbal and written is a crucial part of this field. For a Coms major, having the extensive knowledge in how to communicate with all different types of people in all different type of ways is so important. This skill could become very important when trying to communicate with an employee that is different than what management is used to. Having someone on staff that has mastered this skill could prove to be extremely valuable.

## Appendix H

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communications Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me to gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the Human Resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flowchart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for careers in Human Resources.

Name: Caeli Horwith

Company and Position Title: Associated Students, Inc. - Human Resources Technician

Job Duties: Benefits Administration, HRIS, COBRA, Leave Administration, Information Retention/Data Entry, Payroll - processing changes and audits, Worker's Compensation, New Hire Onboarding, Retirement and Separation Process, Back-up for miscellaneous HR functions such as interviews, background checks, etc.

Undergraduate University Attended: California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Major: Business Administration; Concentration in Managing People and Technology

Minor: N/A

1. During your undergraduate years, what courses did you take that you felt directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources?

*(If a Cal Poly course, please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class. If taken at another university, please provide only the course title and description)*

BUS384 Human Resources Management - Professor Unknown: Introduction to HR ideas and practices, overview of the topics covered and some of the areas of interest that a professional can pursue.

BUS471 Compensation - Amy Vorst: Design and management of compensation systems. Job analysis, job evaluation, wage and salary surveys, incentive systems, pay equity and legal topics. This course includes a large case study that is completed by a group throughout the quarter that focuses on developing a wage/ budget program and compensation policies.

BUS472 Labor Relations - Bradford Anderson: Overview of union organizing, contracts and negotiations. Grievance and arbitration process are also covered.

BUS473 Employment Law - Elizabeth Sperrow: Federal and state labor policy as expressed in common law, relevant statutes, and executive orders are covered.

BUS475 Staffing - Rebecca Ellis: Processes by which individuals and organizations become matched to form the employment relationship. Specific issues related to human resources planning, internal and external recruitment and selection.

COMS413 Training - Michael Fahs: Planning and implementing communication training and development for the organization. Students must put on two different training sessions



throughout the quarter that include learned concepts that equate to successful participants in training sessions.

2. What topical or content areas do you wish you had coursework in to better prepare you for your Human Resources career?

A class that covers Information Systems is listed in the Cal Poly catalog, but it is rarely offered. Having the opportunity to request courses listed in the catalog, such as this one, might be beneficial to students pursuing a career in HR. Courses in organizational diversity pertaining to employment relations and legislative and policy responses to labor force issues of racial and gender inequality isn't quite captured in the courses offered so working that into a separate course or throughout other courses would help round out a student's grasp of HR concepts. Focusing on topics such as workplace diversity, gender and race challenges facing employers and employees, and the skills for managing diversity in addition to the previous diversity issues mentioned could easily be captured in a 10 week course. Lastly, one area of HR that baffles young professionals when they enter the industry is benefits. Having a course that examines employee benefits programs used by employers and those that are used to meet the welfare needs of employees and their families.

3. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

My initial thought is DO IT!! That being said, interest for the field is going to have to be generated early on in a student's college career. HR isn't something that is easily understood from the perspective of most younger college students. Working with the faculty and deans to organize an effort or campaign to convey the concept of HR and what would be included in the curriculum to students would be beneficial.

4. Would you have considered pursuing a specialization in Human Resources during your undergraduate career if it were available?

I wasn't a Comms major, but HR wasn't even offered in OCOB as a specialization during the course of my college career. I made due with the selection of courses that were offered and made my own emphasis in HR, but if more specialized classes were made available I would have taken advantage of that. I think it would be extremely beneficial if OCOB and the Comms department coordinated their efforts in creating a hybrid HR specialization major because of the unique aspects each of the colleges brings to the table. From my perspective, OCOB has a distinct structure to the coursework students go through with emphasis on law, business objectives, and organizational structure. Comms majors develop the ability to be extremely well spoken, professional in their demeanor, and they understand/can convey the best way to communicate something to other individuals whether it is in an interview setting, training program, etc. All of these concepts mentioned are extremely important in the role of an HR professional and there is much opportunity to expand the curriculum that Cal Poly offers to produce graduates well versed in the field of Human Resources.

5. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

Students in the Communications Studies major are going to be well suited to "people" jobs upon graduation, such as Human Resources. More specifically a recruiter/talent acquisition role, T&D position, or something dealing with union contract negotiations. The field of communication studies promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication which is what Human Resource departments are built on, so HR is a logical career path for those students.

## Appendix I

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communications Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me to gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the Human Resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flowchart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for careers in Human Resources.

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Name: Ashley Bartlett

Company and Position Title: Omni San Francisco Hotel- Human Resources Coordinator/Leader in Development

Job Duties:

Undergraduate University Attended: California Polytechnic State University

Major: Business Administration with a concentration in Human Resources Management

Minor:

1. During your undergraduate years, what courses did you take that you felt directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources?

*(If a Cal Poly course, please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class. If taken at another university, please provide only the course title and description)*

Intro to Human Resources Management, Rebecca Ellis- basic coverage of all areas of HR- staffing, compensation, benefits, risk analysis, employment laws, and labor relations

Managing People in Global Markets, Colette Frayne- in depth view of managing human resources abroad and for international based organizations, extensive case studies into expatriates and international human resources issues

Labor Relations, Bradford Anderson- history of labor relations and in-depth coverage of labor relations terms and procedures, did case studies on union contract negotiations and arbitrations/mediations

Employment Law- covered all federal employment laws including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, ADA, FMLA, COBRA, HIPPA, etc.

Compensation- covered process of building compensation structures from start to finish, how to classify jobs and build pay scales

Training and Development, Pat Hosegood-Martin- covered different forms of training and development that organizations use and prepared case studies on different training options

Staffing, Rebecca Ellis- in-depth coverage of job classifications, recruiting, job descriptions, and staffing, had to prepare a staffing plan for a position which included building the job description and writing a formal proposal to staff the position

2. What topical or content areas do you wish you had coursework in to better prepare you for your Human Resources career?

California Labor laws. All of my HR classes focused on the history behind federal laws and briefly touched upon California Labor law, but it would be have been much more beneficial to also study California Labor laws and their impact on employers.

3. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

I think it is a fantastic idea. From my knowledge, the Orfalea College of Business was phasing out their Human Resources Management concentration. I have the highest respect for Cal Poly and its ability to prepare students for careers, but I think there is an ignorance when specializations like Human Resources are not considered in business or relatable curriculums. Human Resources continues to be a vital aspect of business, especially now as labor laws become more stringent and as employees struggle to maintain the human element in the workplace.

4. Would you have considered pursuing a specialization in Human Resources during your undergraduate career if it were available?

I was able to concentrate in Human Resources Management, and I certainly would have looked into take additional HR classes if they had been offered through the Communication studies curriculum.

5. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

HR is a pivotal driver in communication for any organization, so Communication Studies should be allowed the opportunity to study this important piece of business communication.

## Appendix J

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communications Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me to gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the Human Resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flowchart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for careers in Human Resources.

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Name: Jennifer McKenzie (English)

Company and Position Title: Omni Hotels and Resorts; Human Resources Coordinator

Job Duties: Recruitment, benefits administration, employee relations, dealing with government agencies (unemployment claims, disability insurance, etc.), a little training

Undergraduate University Attended: Cal Poly, SLO

Major: Communication Studies

Minor: N/A

1. During your undergraduate years, what courses did you take that you felt directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources?

*(If a Cal Poly course, please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class. If taken at another university, please provide only the course title and description)*

HR Management, taught by Professor Ellis (BUS course number) - went over all of the basic areas of HR. Very helpful in getting the big picture of how HR works within an organization, and what the department's role is

Staffing, taught by Professor Ellis (BUS course number) - very helpful for my current positions, which focuses on Recruitment. Went over all of the strategies that go into staffing the company, from interview questions to wages to the kind of employee you're looking for.

Advanced Organizational Communication, taught by Dr. Fahs (COMS course number) - learned how to organize a training plan and how to effectively train others - yes, I actually use this!

Business and Professional Communication (a COMS optional elective... it has an ENG course number)- the best class I took at Poly, I think, for practical use. How to compose business communication, from emails to proposals to client letters... I use this to impress every day :)

2. What topical or content areas do you wish you had coursework in to better prepare you for your Human Resources career?

A basic business Finance class would HUGELY help me. I spend about 25% of my day involved with some form of accounting (from balancing the HR employee relations budget, to administering employee Parking bills/invoices/deductions, to resolving employee pay issues). A couple of Finance/Accounting classes, focused on practical business application, would greatly help me. I tried taking business finance, but always got kicked out because of the impacted class.

3. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

LOVE IT! I have met SO many people in HR who were Communication Studies majors. It's a natural fit.

4. Would you have considered pursuing a specialization in Human Resources during your undergraduate career if it were available?

Yes

5. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

HR is all about Communication. You interact with every single employee of the company, from the CEO to the janitor. HR requires a ton of multi-tasking and organization, and constant interaction with people (from your own employees to job applicants to vendors). You need excellent communication skills in order to succeed in HR.

## Appendix K

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communications Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me to gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the Human Resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flowchart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for careers in Human Resources.

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Name: Carol Brizendine

Company and Position Title: ASI Coordinator - Human Resources

Job Duties: Coordinate the Human Resources function for a non-profit 501©(3) organization. We employee roughly 500 student employees and 62 full-time career staff. I oversee a department of 3 full-time employees, 1 student manager, and 6 student assistants. We handle all aspects of human resources including recruitment, orientation and training, employee management (evaluations, discipline, etc.), benefits and compensation.

Undergraduate University Attended: Western Illinois University

Major: Communication

Minor: Art

1. During your undergraduate years, what courses did you take that you felt directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources?

*(If a Cal Poly course, please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class. If taken at another university, please provide only the course title and description)*

Organizational Communication - Understanding communication structures of large organizations.

Interpersonal Communication - Communicating with individuals on a 1-1 basis.

Human Communication - Basic Fundamentals of Communication.

Communication and Society - How communication impacts society.

Intro to Persuasion - Basics of persuasion.

Public Speaking

(I also took a leadership course that was not required by my major but was has proven to be very valuable to me in this field. We did a semester long study in courageous leadership, developing trust, enforcing policy, etc.)

2. What topical or content areas do you wish you had coursework in to better prepare you for your Human Resources career?

Employment law, Compensation and Benefits (The communication program at WIU was focused on broadcasting and Public Communication and Human Relations -PCHR). The employment

related classes would have been covered in the Business program. I do feel though that my background in communication has been invaluable to me as an HR professional. I have the tools and skills to communicate with a diverse group of individuals, such as applicants, employees, supervisors, administrators, vendors, etc. When dealing with HR issues, effective communication is essential to success.

3. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

I think this is a wonderful idea. The body of knowledge required of Human Resources professionals is vast.

4. Would you have considered pursuing a specialization in Human Resources during your undergraduate career if it were available?

Possibly. If I could have taken an intro to HR class to learn more about the field when I was an undergrad, I might have continued to pursue that avenue of study. It might be a good idea to require all communication majors to take an intro to HR class in order to explore that area of study and see if any interest develops.

5. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

I feel that my background and education in Communication has served me greatly in the Human Resources field. See question #2.

## Appendix L

As a graduating senior headed for a career in Human Resources, my goal is to create a specialization in Human Resources within the Communications Studies major at Cal Poly as my senior project. By answering the following questions, you will help me to gain insight into the current curriculum at Cal Poly and skills and knowledge discussed that contribute to a professional understanding of the Human Resources field. After reviewing your answers, I will then use the Cal Poly course catalog and draft a flowchart of classes for a possible Human Resources Specialization. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my senior project. Please know that your answers will help many students become better prepared for careers in Human Resources.

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Name: Dawn Annoni

Company and Position Title: HR Technician II

Job Duties: Recruitment, selection and training

Undergraduate University Attended: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and Columbia College

Major: Business

Minor: Human Resources and Management

1. During your undergraduate years, what courses did you take that you felt directly influenced your understanding of Human Resources?

*(If a Cal Poly course, please give the title, course number, instructor and brief description of the class. If taken at another university, please provide only the course title and description)*

Business Law, Employee Training and Development, Staffing, Human Resource Management, Compensation, Employment Law, Labor Relations, and an internship

2. What topical or content areas do you wish you had coursework in to better prepare you for your Human Resources career?

Compensation and Benefits

3. What are your thoughts, reactions or recommendations regarding the creation of a specialization in Human Resources?

I think this is a great idea. Most if not all companies have an HR department and it is crucial to have the department trained and well versed in human resources.

4. Would you have considered pursuing a specialization in Human Resources during your undergraduate career if it were available?

Yes as it would allow me to be exposed to all areas of human resources

5. Why should a Communication Studies major consider Human Resources as a career?

Communication is key for any organization, I think if more companies focused on this there would be greater returns. My experience working with communication students here on campus has played a valuable role in our hiring and these students are looked up to as they are knowledgeable in their field. While adding HR into the mix will gain more exposure to the business world.



## Appendix M

**Specialization**  
**Organizational Communication and Human Resources**  
 Communication Studies Department

For Communication Studies majors considering a career in management, human resources, and marketing or for those advancing to graduate work related to these topics.

Required Coursework:		Units
COMS 301	Business and Professional Communication	4
ENGL 310	Corporate Communication	4
COMS 413	Advanced Organizational Communication	4
COMS 450	Internship	2-4
		<u>14-16 units</u>

*Choose twelve (12) elective units from the following:		Units
BUS 382	Organizations, People, and Technology	4
BUS 384	Human Resources Management	4
BUS 386	Employee Training and Development	4
BUS 387	Organizational Behavior	4
BUS 471	Compensation	4
BUS 472	Labor Relations	4
BUS 473	Employment Law	4
BUS 475	Staffing	4
BUS 486	Human Resources Information Systems	4
SOC 395	Sociology of Complex Organizations	4
REC 320	Special Event Planning	4
REC 420	Festival and Event Management	4

**TOTAL:** 26-28 units

\*Other elective classes may be substituted with consent of advisor

## Appendix N

## Specialization Pre-Law

Communication Studies Department

For Communication Studies majors considering a career in law, criminal justice, and politics or for those advancing to graduate work related to these topics.

Required Coursework:		Units
COMS 416	Intercultural Communication	4
COMS 331	Contemporary Rhetorical Theory	4
PHIL 331	Ethics	4
PHIL 335	Social Ethics	4
		<u>16 units</u>

*Choose twelve (12) elective units from the following:		Units
COMS 435	American Political Rhetoric	4
BUS 207	Legal Responsibilities of Business	4
PHIL 341	Professional Ethics	4
PHIL 439	Selected Problems in Ethics and Political Philosophy	4
POLS 334	Jurisprudence	4
POLS 340	American Judicial Politics	4
POLS 343	Civil Rights in America	4
POLS 344	Civil Liberties	4
POLS 428	Issues and Topics in Comparative Politics	4
SOC 402	Crime and Violence	4
SOC 406	Juvenile Delinquency	4
SOC 412	Criminal Justice	4

**TOTAL: 28 units**

\*Other elective classes may be substituted with consent of advisor

Appendix O

**Specialization**  
**Persuasion and Sales**  
 Communication Studies Department

For Communication Studies majors considering a career in sales, marketing, and public relations or for those advancing to graduate work related to these topics.

This specialization also relies heavily on the content covered in the required Communication Studies course “Persuasion” (COMS 322), which must be completed to obtain both a Bachelor of Arts degree for Communication Studies, as well as credit for the Persuasion and Sales specialization.

Required Coursework:		Units
ENGL 310	Corporate Communication	4
COMS 416	Intercultural Communication	4
COMS 301	Business and Professional Communication	4
COMS 450	Internship	2-4
		<u>14-16 units</u>

*Choose twelve (12) elective units from the following:		Units
BUS 346	Principles of Marketing	4
BUS 401	Seminar in General Management and Strategy	4
BUS 404	Governmental and Social Influences	4
BUS 418	Listening to the Customer	4
BUS 419	Strategic Marketing Management	4
BUS 451	Product Development and Launch	4
BUS 452	Product Management	4
BUS 454	Developing/Presenting Marketing Projects	4
BUS 455	Marketing Strategy	4
ECON 221	Microeconomics	4
ECON 222	Macroeconomics	4
JOURN 312	Introduction to Public Relations	4
PSY 252	Social Psychology	4
SOC 315	Global Race and Ethnic Relations	4

**TOTAL: 28 units**

\*Other elective classes may be substituted with consent of advisor

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